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Università Vita-Salute
San Raffaele

UniSR
Strategic Plan
2019–2022

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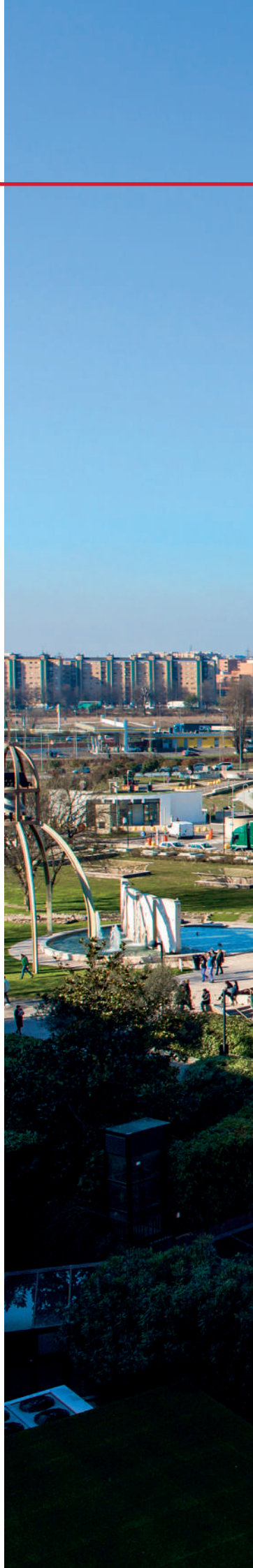

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Strategic Plan
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The University's strategic planning for the 2019-2022 four-year period was motivated by the need to combine its strong and consolidated tradition with challenging new objectives able to satisfy an increasingly complex and multi-variable scenario, under rapid and constant evolution, fashioned by digital transformation and environmental sustainability processes, as well as those of an economic-financial and regulatory nature, of which Vita-Salute San Raffaele University (hereinafter UniSR) is an integral and interacting part.

The explicit recognition of the University's educational role within the "society of knowledge" and the change of *Governance* (a new Board of Directors was appointed in June 2018), spurred a thorough review of the University's strategic lines of development, broken down into the following strategic macro-objectives: *Student Happiness, Internationalisation* and *Digital Transformation.*

Following an intense review process involving all key areas of the University, the strategic planning (2019-2022) includes, in addition to the Mission, the declination of the main promise of value that emblemises and differentiates UniSR: *"Innovating through knowledge".*
The University's strategic map is broken down into domains (*Teaching, Research, Third Mission, Infrastructures and general services, Human Resources*).

Within each of these domains, the strategic objectives and corresponding operational actions that will make it possible to implement them and to guarantee the on-going pursuit of the Quality objective have been defined. Being transverse, the strategic macro-objectives (*Student Happiness*, *Internationalisation* and *Digital Transformation*) will impact all of the domains and, consequently, all the strategic objectives.

Main steps of planning:

- Interpretation of three new strategic macro-objectives;
- Definition of the main promise of value to be added to the University's Mission;
- Study of the context in question (identification of the *change drivers* and externally-conducted functional analysis of the way our University is perceived by the main *stakeholders*, in terms of both *brand equity* and *student journey*);
- For the various domains, the illustration of the strategic objectives and corresponding operational actions, taking Quality policy into due consideration;
- For each individual action, the definition of the general time-line, the overall budget, the drivers and Index/Target.

[...] in addition to the Mission, the declination of the main promise of value that emblemises and differentiates UniSR: *"Innovating through knowledge"*

1.2 The University's Mission

UniSR operates along four main lines:

- a plurality of outlooks united by a common interest in the human being in all its aspects;
- the entwining of disciplines to form a shared method;
- focussing on the present challenges facing research and knowledge;
- the preparation of professionals ready to deal with the needs of contemporary society and able to make a contribution towards a more prosperous future.

The core of UniSR's Mission remains its attention regarding the essential dimensions of the human being: body, mind and spirit (studied by the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Psychology and the Faculty of Philosophy, respectively) and, therefore, the will to answer the question "*Quid est homo?*".

The University strives to establish a dialogue between science and cultural traditions with the objective of pursuing an on-going and unending renewal of knowledge in all fields, through the adoption of a "holistic outlook"

embodied by a daily environment that is rich in stimuli, able to offer a multitude of opportunities for the exploration and exchange of ideas, and to guarantee a broad and diversified human experience able to prepare young people for the world of employment in a completely new way.

It is to this "interdisciplinary" spirit that the pluralistic, inclusive and multicultural vocation that the University intends to consolidate and expand belongs.

1.3 "Innovating through Knowledge"

The transition from the "information society" associated with the process of technological transformation, to the "knowledge society" that expands its perimeter by embracing social, ethical and political issues by encouraging the sharing and diffusion of knowledge as part of an inclusive outlook (knowledge as a common good, made available to the whole community), has led to a gradual change in the nature of university education, the way it is provided and the University's role in society.

The recognition of the University's educational task as an Institution attributed the responsibility of focussing on the human being as the producer and vehicle of knowledge, has urged UniSR to intensify its efforts to develop an "innovation culture" by creating a more dynamic and interactive learning environment where digital technology becomes a support tool, able to promote new forms of thought organisation, new ways of learning and alternative forms of interpersonal communication and cooperation.

The University therefore intends to accept the challenges of a very exciting moment in time for the university world that presents greater opportunities for innovation than in the past, due partly to the evolution in the expectations of its main stakeholders.

More specifically:

- Students: whose expectations are determined by common social transformations within globalisation and can be summarised as the "shorter attention span" (different biological rhythm) of the new generations compared to previous generations. Therefore, aspects such as the architecture of the facility, namely the design and organisation of spaces (*teaching rooms, study rooms, libraries, etc.*) or the planning of time, intended as the programming of lessons and exams, can have a positive or negative impact on student performance and are considered an "added value". Overall they favour communication and support new learning and teaching models that require a switch from lecturing where the student's involvement is primarily passive (*summative assessment*) to a new form of teaching characterised by greater student-teacher interaction, allowing the former to constantly identify their strengths and weaknesses and the latter to be able to intervene in those areas in which their students are weakest (*formative assessment*).
- The working world: the expectation is that new graduates receive an education that does not merely specialise in the chosen subject but that also provides transverse skills (*soft skills*), by improving the methods used to help students recognise their aptitudes and develop their self-knowledge and -perception in relation to the world of employment.
- State: in addition to responsibility and transparency, Universities are expected to be able to demonstrate their ability to pursue excellent results in all domains (Teaching, Research, Third Mission).

In line with the evolution of the expectations of its main *stakeholders* and as a consequence of the importance attributed to knowledge as a resource for individual and community life, the University summarises in the *"Innovating through knowledge"* principle its main promise of value, together with its original vocation of answering the question *"Quid est Homo?"*.

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2. The Context – Market And Position

Context analysis is the first step towards the definition of UniSR's strategic planning, as it makes it possible to understand the scenario in which the institution operates.
The University therefore deemed it necessary to identify a starting point on to which it could subsequently graft the strategic map of objectives/actions, on the one hand, by identifying the **main factors that influence the ecosystem of the *Education*** sector (*change drivers*) and, on the other, by performing a thorough analysis of the **perception that the main *stakeholders* have of the University** in terms of both internal and external *brand equity*, and the *student journey.*

2.1 *Change Drivers*

Two phenomena that affect the whole of the context within which the University operates are*: first and foremost*, digital transformation, i.e. the ability of new and emerging technologies to modify operating methods in all domains. It provides an opportunity to improve and redefine the university experience as a whole, also with regard to the expertise of students, who are increasingly more enlightened, better connected, *digital* contaminators.
Today's students are the primary users of digital transformation and, as such, they are and will increasingly be receptive to evaluating the approach universities have to change.

Secondly, environmental sustainability, in line with the challenges set by the UN's 2030 Agenda for sustainable development according to which universities are called on to play an active part, not merely by improving the facilities and services they offer, but also, as a reference point for the scenario and area they operate in as part of a *"glocal"* outlook, as a significant opportunity to strengthen their relationship and communication with the rest of society.

The phenomena described above are occurring at a moment in time that has witnessed the birth of a single university education market that has increasingly urged students to explore new contacts and consider periods spent abroad as an essential educational experience that is decisive for access to the world of employment.

Together with this, another factor that belongs to the context stems from the fact that UniSR, as a private university, needs to guarantee sustainable resource management in the short, medium and long term through the constant monitoring of its positive balance sheet.

Today's students are the primary users of digital transformation

2.2 The perception of *Stakeholders*

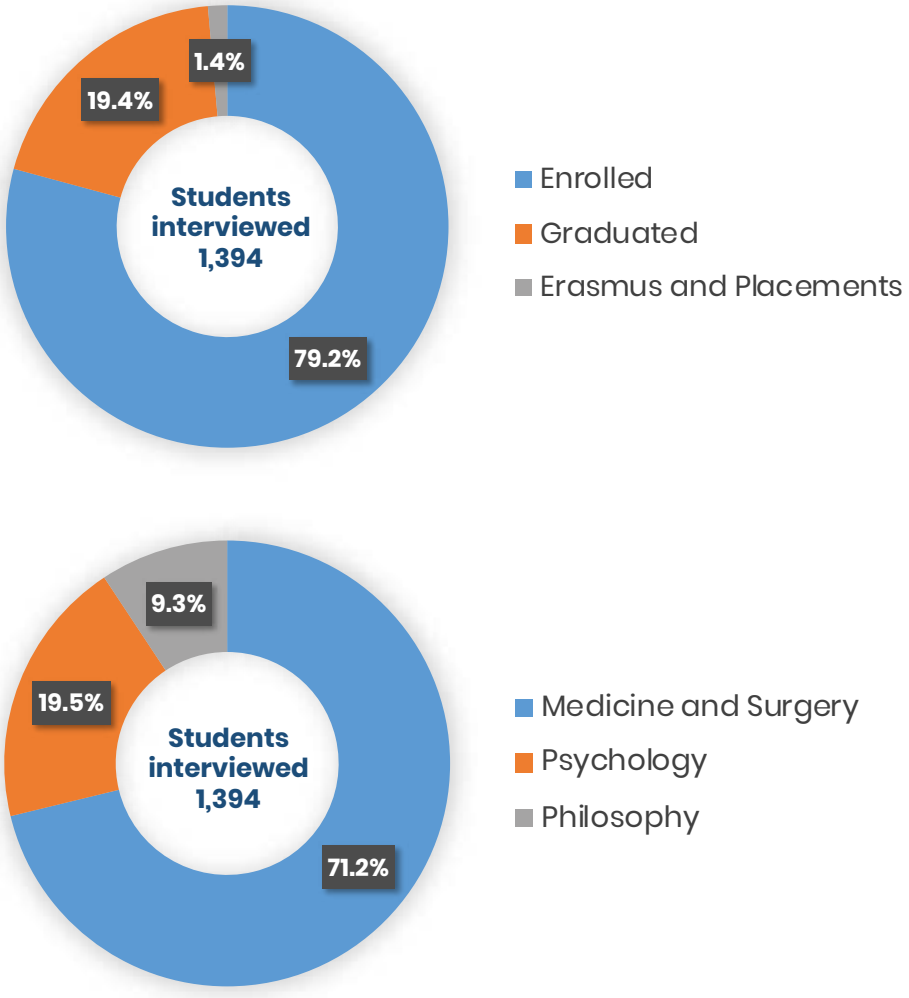
The need to conduct external research originates from the need to obtain better self-awareness and acquire a functional analysis to be used as a basis for the planning and development of the University's strategic plan.
The study was conducted on a number of subject targets, as shown in the table below:

Figure 1:
Survey methods

TARGET	LISTENING AND DIALOGUE METHOD	
	QUALITATIVE	QUANTITATIVE
Internal stakeholders	In-depth interview **(9)**	-
Students currently enrolled for UniSR degree courses	Personal focus groups at University **(4 focus groups)**	WEB interviews **(1,104)**
Foreign students	Personal focus groups at University - Students **(1 focus group)** Personal focus groups at University - Erasmus and Specialities **(4)**	WEB interviews **(19)**
Secondary school students (5th year) in the process of choosing their university course	Chat-room discussion groups in Italian **(1 group; 30 students; 1 week)**	-
UniSR Graduates	-	WEB interviews **(271)**
Students attending competitor faculties/universities	Chat-room discussion groups in Italian **(1 group; 25 students; 1 week)**	-

Three different questionnaires were devised for each category, in order to explore both the distinctive and characterising issues of each segment and issues common to the entire Uni-SR universe. The interviews were distributed in proportion to both the 3 targets interviewed (Enrolled students, Graduates, Erasmus and *Placements*) and for each faculty, to obtain the various sub-samples. The *redemption* rates were good and proportionate to the number of students involved.

Figure 2:
Survey sample broken down by target and faculty



The analysis shows that the University is well known, especially amongst *prospective* students considering the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery: word-of-mouth amongst friends and family (especially youngsters at university) and consultation of the University's website are the two main sources of *brand awareness*.
The opinion of secondary school teachers regarding the choice of university career also remains an important factor for youngsters, especially those intending to enrol with the Faculty of Philosophy.

Internally, the University is considered a cutting-edge, modern and innovative centre of excellence, with an outstanding reputation amongst those who know it, thanks to its teaching and educational content, the way learning is organised and the teaching method used (the only one of its kind in Italy), the quality of the teaching body, the research activities and, no less importantly, the university's connections with IRCCS Ospedale San Raffaele, which represents a differentiating element of the *student journey* (students have the chance to take an active part in ward and laboratory life).
UniSR is primarily known abroad thanks to its international partnerships and represents a desirable destination for those who wish to come and study in Italy, and, in particular, in Milan. However, it would appear that the perceptive *driver* of foreign students still varies greatly, especially with regard to the type and duration of the experience.

The University therefore intends to continue pursuing the development of an innovative educational product and services that are increasingly tailored to meet student needs, placing special attention on the multicultural factor and the creation of an *international-friendly* environment.

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3. The strategic macro-objectives

Student Happiness: the first of the University's strategic macro-objectives and the transverse declination of its *human-centred* and *comprehensive* approach; it consists in putting students at the centre of its activities by making them the focal point of all its commitments, in terms of both teaching and the services provided, in order to create a favourable and inclusive environment, by advocating innovative teaching and learning methods, as part of a vision of curricular interdisciplinarity and approach to the world of employment.

Internationalisation: the University's second strategic macro-objective regards its ability to attract and recruit resources (human capital and financial contributions), develop international relations and establish partnerships with leading universities abroad, as part of a vision of comprehensive *internationalisation*[1].

As we are increasingly required to operate in international contexts, the University's internationalisation process cannot be limited to recruiting foreign students or increasing the number of foreign study programmes, but must also embrace common goals involving the whole institution and all its stakeholders (*governance*, the *faculty*, the administrative body and students) and must reflect a series of activities and strategies to be adopted in order to respond to the general process of globalisation, which inevitably involves multiculturality.

Internationalisation therefore becomes an essential element of the University's development policy.

1
"Comprehensive internationalization is a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise.
It is essential that it is embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units".
(Hudzik 2011).

The basic concept is that the University develops and offers the educational experience, and that students "interpret" it and determine its reputation, thereby becoming *advocates* of the University

Digital Transformation: the third strategic macro-objective regards the University's involvement in a digital transformation process, considered as the adoption of technologically-modern approaches to teaching and research, as well as the digitalisation of administrative processes, in order to provide a highly qualified and qualifying educational product supported by an efficient organisation and services.

From this standpoint, *Digital Transformation* represents a radical and clean break from the past, one that is necessarily disruptive, as it does not merely mean investing in IT, but also directing the entire University towards cultural, organisational, social, creative and managerial changes that are associated with and facilitated by the use of applications and digital devices.

In other words, the underlying concept is to create, by means of technological innovation, a "Digital campus" able to meet the requirements of a new paradigm, which is represented by the acronym *"ATAWAD" (any time, anywhere, any device)*[2].

In line with the University's Quality policy, the macro-objectives described above correlate with the following fundamental **principles**:

- a **"person-centred"** approach, in order to guarantee **continuing interaction with and satisfaction of the needs of all the individuals involved** (students, teachers, technical and administrative staff);
- the adoption of a ***Comprehensive* approach**, i.e. one that is **inclusive and regards the entire university** (from recruitment policy, through to staff, the student body and life on campus).

The basic concept is that the University develops and offers the educational experience, and that students "interpret" it and determine its reputation, thereby becoming advocates of the University.

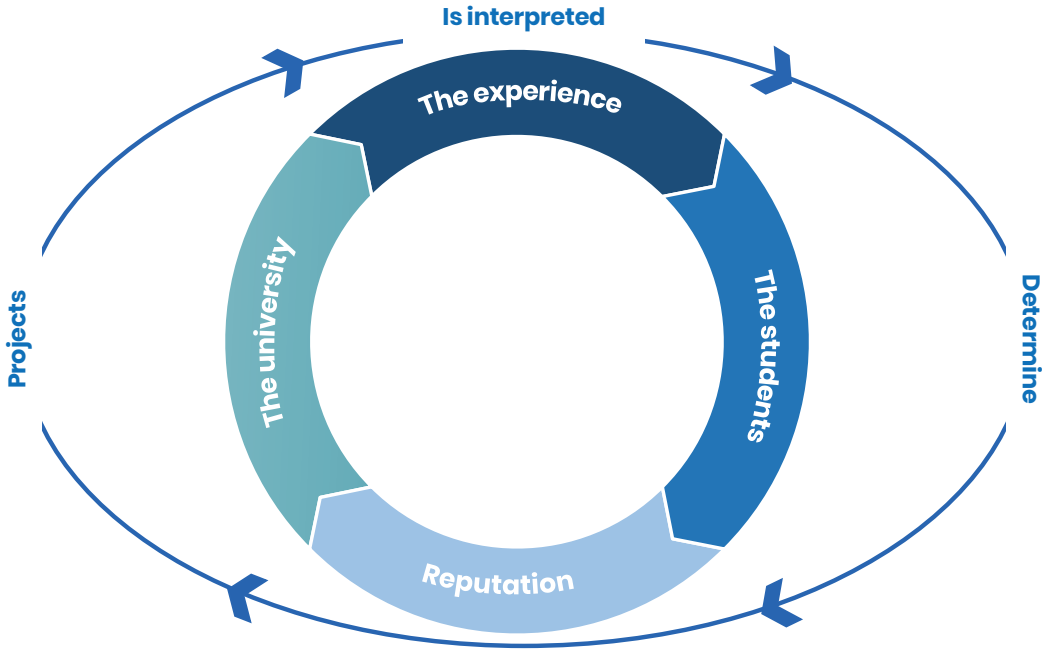

Figure 3:
From experience to reputation – Source: CEGOS France

2
"Atawad": constantly connected mobile devices are ubiquitous and available to all; social media have become the most widespread means of communication, the availability of APPs, the power of in-cloud calculation and "always on" technology are the technological factors that have most guided the change, at a moment in time characterised by the progressive simplification of human work due to the introduction of technologies based on artificial intelligence.

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4. Executive Summary

4.1 Teaching

In academic circles and educational facilities, for a long time there has been talk of the need to review conventional teaching methods, which constitutes not only an unprecedented challenge for universities, but also an opportunity for innovation.

Attempts to deal with a given discipline in a systematic and exhaustive manner through conventional courses has led to a significant increase in the teaching load, above all in the form of classroom lessons, which has detracted time and energy from more practical and interactive forms of learning.

The recognition of the limits of conventional teaching together with the shorter attention span observed in new student cohorts compared to previous generations *(attention span shrinkage)* has urged the University to consider the need to review conventional teaching, by privileging innovative approaches to teaching able to combine learning, practice and application and to constantly monitor students' level of learning and/or any critical aspects observed *in itinere.*

In addition, the teaching of modern medicine must necessarily dedicate special attention to the interpersonal relationship between doctor and patient. UniSR therefore recognises the importance of offering its students structured learning sessions that guarantee the acquisition of the skills needed to learn the basic techniques for interacting with patients.

	Strategic objectives	Quality policy	Student Happiness	Internationalisation	Digital Transformation
1	Innovation of teaching activities	To broaden the educational opportunities and regularly review the structure of courses and the educational objectives, in order to satisfy the training needs expressed by stakeholders, with a formative assessment and multicultural approach	x	x	x
		To broaden and review the educational opportunities with an international approach	x	x	
2	Creation of services that support teaching innovation	To guarantee, throughout the curriculum, effective and efficient learning, based on the principle of active student participation, thereby favouring a cultural exchange between students and teaching staff as part of a personalised relationship	x	x	x
		To develop innovative teaching techniques	x	x	x
		To improve the administrative and technical/scientific structure for teaching	x	x	x
3	To increase international attractiveness	To develop the internationalisation of courses by advocating international exchange programmes and recruiting teaching staff with international experience	x	x	
		To broaden and review the educational opportunities with an international approach	x	x	x
		To develop the international vocation of teaching	x	x	x
4	To broaden the educational opportunities	To encourage continuing education, in particular by activating continuing professional development or permanent education courses and cultural activities, also in international settings	x	x	x
		To broaden the educational opportunities and regularly review the structure of courses and the educational objectives, in order to satisfy the training needs expressed by stakeholders, with a formative assessment and multicultural approach	x	x	

4.2 Research

In the "knowledge society", Universities represent for Research a privileged "laboratory", in that they are able to put their facilities at the service of the creation of value which is, in turn, instrumental to social, economic and cultural development.

UniSR therefore believes that Research must develop as a central and fundamental aspect of the University in order to guarantee high-quality scientific production, capable of making a decisive contribution to the creation of common value by processing concepts and projects, not only within Italy, but also in European and international scenarios.
With regard to its strategic planning (2019 - 2022), the University intends to continue to guarantee "interdisciplinary" Research, by pursuing mechanisms that reinforce the forms of cooperation and internal and external sharing of resources and know-how, that takes place freely and autonomously, that is based on a code of behavioural integrity *(Research Integrity)* that maintains its reliability and reproducibility and that is open and shared *(Open science/data sharing)*.

	Strategic objectives	Quality policy	Student Happiness	Internationalisation	Digital Transformation
1	Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI)	To assure research integrity, in order guarantee the reliability and reproducibility of scientific data	x	x	
		To develop operating guidelines, procedures and regulations	x	x	
		To develop educational activities in order to improve the presentation of scientific data	x	x	
		To promote the quality and significance of the research produced, also in order to permit the facility's international acknowledgement		x	
2	Development and promotion of multidisciplinary research activities	To improve the administrative support for research	x	x	
		To encourage interdisciplinarity, by means of mechanisms that develop forms of cooperation and internal and external resource sharing	x	x	
		To encourage researchers to publish their basic and applied research, by developing cultural initiatives on the dissemination and promotion of scientific and cultural knowledge.	x	x	
3	Promotion of the international acknowledgement of research	To develop operating guidelines, procedures and regulations	x	x	
		To promote the recruitment, including on an international level, of highly qualified and professional teaching staff in both teaching and scientific research settings	x	x	

4.3 The Third Mission

In addition to Teaching and Research, the University pursues a Third Mission, in other words, it strives to favour the promotion and transmission of knowledge in order to make a contribution to the social, cultural and economic development of Society.

More specifically, on campus, UniSR extensively promotes Third Mission activities through both the development and promotion of Research promotion activities and *Public Engagement.*

With regard to the Strategic Plan, UniSR intends to increase its commitment also through the creation of an internal organisation dedicated to the systematic collection, on-going monitoring and assessment of Third Mission activities, for planning and continuous improvement purposes.

	Strategic objectives	Quality policy	Student Happiness	Internationalisation	Digital Transformation
1	Development and promotion of research advocacyactivities	To encourage invention and transfer of the correpsonding technology through the identification of third parties potentially interested in the purchase and/or economic exploitation of the invention	x	x	
2	Development and promotion of Public Engagement activities	To support events organised in order to involve the local population, thereby helping to strenghten the social fabric and its vocation as a place of exchange and knowledge	x		
		To favour contact with the world of employment and the professions, also by promoting company, prefessionals and dissertation internships	x	x	
		To develop operating guidelines, procedures and regulations	x		
3	Promotion of the international acknowledgement of research	To improve public health and scientific communication activities	x		

4.4 Infrastructures and general services

UniSR puts the student at the centre of its initiatives aimed at improving teaching, research and administrative processes and relations with the local area and encourages participation and involvement in life on campus. The University is convinced that it is essential to dedicate the greatest possible attention to the activities that accompany student life, students' needs and expectations, as well as their wellness throughout their university careers.
This attention is declined into services aimed at improving the continuous interaction between students and university staff (both academic and non), in order to provide the most effective answer to their different needs and, at the same time, to optimise and improve support services.

UniSR also intends to do its utmost to reduce the environmental impact of its activities, in order to provide an active response to the challenges set by the *Global Risks Report 2019*, which puts extreme meteorological conditions, the inability to take action regarding climate change, and natural catastrophes at the top of the list of risks, which paints a worrying picture of the deep interconnections between these environmental risks and the level of human health, economic growth and safety.

The University therefore intends to launch four projects that actively involve students and staff.

The aim of these initiatives is to modify those spontaneous actions that have until now been used naturally and to transform them into virtuous actions, by involving the teaching staff specialising in behavioural science and defining a plan of parallel actions aimed at obtaining the *commitment* of the entire university community.

UniSR puts the student at the centre of its initiatives aimed at improving teaching, research and administrative processes and relations with the local area and encourages participation and involvement in life on campus

	Strategic objectives	Quality policy	Student Happiness	Internationalisation	Digital Transformation
1	Review of administrative and support processes	To develop digital transformation initiatives in order to simplify processes and data management	x	x	x
		To guarantee effective information and guidance services, enrolment support services and specialised tutor services during courses, with a view also to improving the drop-out rate	x	x	x
		To develop digital transformation initiatives in order to simplify processes and data management	x	x	x
2	Development of student support services	To guarantee effective information and guidance services, enrolment support services and specialised tutor services during courses, with a view also to improving the drop-out rate	x	x	
		To guarantee, throughout the curriculum, effective and efficient learning, based on the principle of active student participation, thereby favouring a cultural exchange between students and teaching staff as part of a personalised relationship	x	x	
		To develop the quality management system for postgraduate programmes	x		x
3	User-friendly spaces and services	To improve the layout of teaching rooms and communal teaching support and individual study areas	x	x	x
4	Sustainability	To develop the University's ecosustainable vocation	x		

4.5 Human Resources

In order to achieve the aims of the Strategic Plan, the University puts special emphasis on the recruitment and continuing professional development of its human resources, in terms of both its administrative staff and teaching body.
For the teaching staff, the University has developed an incentives policy and adopted recruitment policies that focus on internationalisation and balancing the relationship between the various teaching staff categories.
Special attention will be dedicated to Associate Professors.
Recruitment will also focus on technical and administrative staff, to cover new positions supporting the pursuit of the specific operational actions envisaged by this Strategic Plan.

	Strategic objectives	Quality policy	Student Happiness	Internationalisation	Digital Transformation
1	Development of skill sets	To implement training courses in order to improve expertise and develop potential	x	x	x
		To improve the administrative support for teaching and services for students	x	x	x
2	Incentivisation	To develop reward policies to incentivise the teaching staff to guarantee the adoption of transparent and measurable methods for result monitoring and assessment	x	x	
3	Recruitment policy	To promote the recruitment, including on an international level, of highly qualified and professional teaching staff in both teaching and scientific research settings	x	x	
		To guarantee teaching staff freedom and autonomy in their basic and applied research activities	x	x	

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